



CITY OF MILWAUKEE
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

2025

**COMMUNITY HEALTH
ASSESSMENT**

Executive Summary



PURPOSE

The 2025 City of Milwaukee Community Health Assessment (CHA) provides a comprehensive look at the health and well-being of residents and the conditions that influence it. By combining data with community voices, the CHA identifies both strengths and challenges that shape health in Milwaukee. The findings help guide local programs, partnerships, and policies that **promote health equity across all neighborhoods.**

VISION

The Milwaukee Community Health Assessment aims to make data accessible to residents, community-based organizations, and partners, empowering them to work together and build on the strengths that already exist in our city. By using data to improve systems, address barriers, and expand opportunities, **Milwaukee can become a place where everyone has the chance to live, work, and play in health and well-being.**

LEADERSHIP

The City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) led the CHA in partnership with the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership (MHCP), hospitals, local government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. For the first time, MHD aligned its CHA timeline and data collection with hospital Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNAs) and the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). **This alignment ensures all partners are working from the same data to better serve Milwaukee residents.**

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

The CHA followed the **MAPP 2.0** (Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships) framework, a national approach for understanding and improving community health.

The process happened in three main steps:



BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

Making sure the right partners and community voices were at the table, especially from groups that are often underrepresented, such as refugees, residents with disabilities, American Indian community members, and Black men.



TELLING THE COMMUNITY'S STORY

Gathering information through 3,400 community surveys, 46 interviews, and 14 focus groups to understand health challenges and strengths from residents' perspectives.



CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Reviewing data, identifying disparities, and sharing findings with residents and partners to spark discussion and collective learning.

WHAT SHAPES HEALTH IN MILWAUKEE?

Health is about more than healthcare.

It's also about the places where people live, work, learn, and play. Community members described many factors that make a healthy Milwaukee, from access to mental health care and nutritious food to clean air, safe housing, and reliable transportation.

These everyday conditions form the foundation for physical, mental, and social well-being.



KEY THEMES OF THE CHA

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Violence and injury remain leading causes of premature death and disability in Milwaukee. Unintentional injuries such as overdoses, falls, and crashes are the top cause of death for residents ages 1–44. Homicides, shootings, and domestic violence continue to deeply affect families and neighborhoods. Residents across focus groups shared how fear of gun violence and reckless driving affects their sense of safety and limits outdoor activity.

EDUCATION

In Milwaukee, White residents are more than twice as likely as Black or Hispanic residents to have completed a four-year college degree. These gaps limit job opportunities, income, and access to health information.

HOUSING AND STABILITY

Housing and healthcare are deeply intertwined. In Milwaukee, about one-third of families of color own their homes, compared to much higher rates in surrounding areas. Focus group participants described mold, fire hazards, and fear of eviction as daily stressors that impact both physical and mental health.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Life expectancy in Milwaukee fell sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic and is now slowly recovering, though progress has been uneven. Unintentional overdoses, especially from synthetic opioids like fentanyl, are now the main cause of lost years of life, making up nearly 20% of all years lost in 2023. Each overdose shortened a life by about 27 years on average, while firearm homicides accounted for about 10% of years lost, with an average of 44 years lost per person. These losses highlight how substance use and violence continue to take lives to soon in Milwaukee.

HEALTH PRIORITIES

Based on community input and health indicator data, **five priority health areas emerged:**



CHRONIC DISEASE



MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH



MENTAL HEALTH



SUBSTANCE USE



VIOLENCE AND INJURY

ECONOMIC STABILITY

Milwaukee continues to face deep economic gaps. While unemployment has improved overall, White residents have the lowest unemployment rates, and Black and Hispanic residents face much higher rates of poverty. Children and older adults are especially likely to live below the poverty line.

HEALTH OUTCOMES

Everyday stressors can have a cumulative impact. Some health indicators are improving, but serious inequities remain. From 2019 to 2022, two-thirds (66%) of all infant deaths were among non-Hispanic Black infants, even as overall infant mortality declined. These disparities reflect ongoing inequities in healthcare access, stress, and living conditions.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS

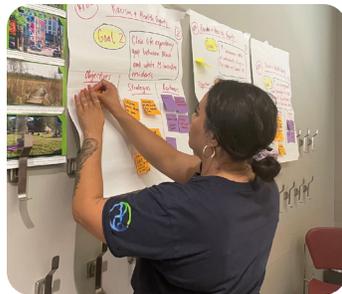
Healthcare is available in our city, but it is not the same for everyone. Most residents have health insurance, but many still face barriers to care. Hispanic/Latino residents have the highest uninsured rate (21%), compared with 13% of Black residents and 4.7% of White residents. About 1 in 10 adults said they skipped care because of cost, and 15% said they don't have a regular healthcare provider. Others may skip care because of lack of transportation or childcare.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Stigma and other barriers can make it harder to seek help when needed. Nearly 1 in 5 adults report frequent mental distress, meaning they experienced poor mental health for two or more weeks in the past month. About 30% of residents reported being told by a doctor or nurse that they have a mental health condition. Community members also described challenges such as stigma, long waits for care, and isolation, especially among people with disabilities and older adults.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

The results of the CHA will inform public health programs and initiatives for the next few years. In addition, the CHA is part of an ongoing process of learning and doing for the whole community. The next step in this process is to develop a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) to address the most important health issues affecting our community.



The CHIP is a collaborative, community-wide, long-term plan to address health priorities and make sure all people have what they need to be healthy and well. In 2026, people and organizations throughout the city will continue to work together to implement plans to help address our community's health goals and objectives. People and groups involved with the CHIP will continue to meet on a regular basis to monitor how the plan is being implemented and the results. Progress on the CHIP will be shared broadly each year.



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